

Viet escalation!

Ike's two-Viet plan is revealed

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WASHINGTON — The late President Dwight D. Eisenhower secretly established in 1958 a national policy to eliminate Communist control in Hanoi and reunite North and South Vietnam under a pro-U.S. government, official documents revealed Thursday.

In a National Security Council paper, NSC 5809, dated April 2, 1958, Eisenhower directed the government to "work toward the weakening of the Communists of North and South Vietnam in order to bring about the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Vietnam under anti-Communist leadership."

Eisenhower took the decision, the documents show, at the high point of his confidence in Ngo Dinh Diem's ability to emerge as a truly national, anti-Communist leader.

Diem, who has been installed as prime minister by the United States in 1954, impressed Eisenhower and Sec. of State John Foster Dulles with his unexpected efficiency in putting down a number of dissident sects in 1955.

Just before the crackdown, Gen. J. Lawton Collins, Eisenhower's envoy in Saigon, recommended that Diem be removed. Dulles concurred and the State Department sent a cable to the U.S. Embassy directing that Diem be kicked upstairs into the presidency, then a figurehead position.

Surprised at Diem's forceful performance against the sects, Washington revoked the cable and ordered it burned.

Eisenhower and Dulles were also encouraged by the seemingly mild reaction to Diem's decision to cancel the 1956 national elections, which had been agreed upon in the 1954 Geneva (Switzerland) accords.

Red victory at polls seen

Eisenhower acquiesced in Diem's move on the basis of a Central Intelligence Agency assessment that the Saigon government "almost certainly would not be able to defeat the Communists in countrywide elections."

The documents indicate a growing sense of optimism between 1955 and 1958 in Diem's possibilities as a leader of both halves of Vietnam. But just as NSC 5809 was being promulgated, the Viet Cong launched their insurgency. And although

tional policy, the documents indicate the Eisenhower administration was subsequently forced to concentrate on salvaging Diem's regime.

The documents, disclosed to The Sun-Times by a number of reliable sources, also revealed these previously unpublished facts about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam:

(1) All contingency planning for the bombing of North Vietnam was completed by mid-June, 1964, but the White House passed the order to mark time "during the next six months," that is, until December, the month after the Presidential election.

(2) Former President Lyndon B. Johnson was advised by a top-level panel in early 1964 that bombing North Vietnam would not win the war. Soon after the bombing began it was evident that it was not working and this was confirmed by an exhaustive study in 1967, a full year before it was stopped in November, 1968.

(3) A few days after taking office, Mr. Johnson issued a National Security Memo, NSAM 273, on Nov. 26, 1963 ordering plans for "possible increased activity" in secret raids on North Vietnam.

(4) From the beginning of the direct U.S. military involvement, high-ranking officials had difficulty estimating how many civilians were included in casualty figures. White House adviser Michael Forrestal observed after a visit to Vietnam in 1963: "No one really knows how many of the 20,000 'Viet Cong' killed last year were only innocent, or at least persuadable, villagers."

(5) William Jorden, a key Vietnam specialist, was sent to South Vietnam in 1963 to draw up evidence to support the administration's contention of massive infiltration by North Vietnam. He reported back: "We are unable to document and develop any hard evidence of infiltration."

(7) Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor was the principal exponent of the domino theory inside the Johnson administration. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Taylor warned on Jan. 22, 1964, that the fall of South Vietnam would result in the immediate loss of Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. He also warned that there could be a dangerous reaction in Burma, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Korea and the Philippines and possibly similar "unfavorable effects" in Africa and in Latin America.

The CIA, on the other hand, consistently argued that it was unlikely that any other country would go Communist.

CIA estimate disregarded

The documents show that the CIA was largely disregarded by the policy-makers from the start of the U.S. involvement. The

years was that Ho represented an almost irresistible nationalist force and Diem showed no promise of establishing a solid non-Communist government.

In a National Intelligence Estimate of August, 1954, the CIA said it did "not believe there will be the dramatic transformation in French policy necessary to win the active loyalty and support of the local population for a South Vietnam government."

"Although it is possible that the French and the Vietnamese, even with support from the U.S. and other powers, may be able to establish a strong regime in South Vietnam, we believe that the chances for this development are poor and, moreover, that the situation is more likely to continue to deteriorate progressively over the next year."

Find high regard for Ho

The CIA concluded in another document at the time that "the most significant particular political sentiment of the bulk of the population was an antipathy for the French combined with a personal regard for Ho Chi Minh as the symbol of Vietnamese nationalism."

The CIA predicted that the Communists would remain in a state of "relative quiescence" if Diem held the 1956 national elections as required by the 1954 Geneva accords that ended the war with the French. In effect, the CIA argued that Diem provoked the Communist uprising by renegeing on the elections.

The documents show that Eisenhower was warned in advance by the CIA that Diem would balk at the elections but did nothing to see that they were held.

Branded a dictatorship

Eisenhower and Sec. of State John Foster Dulles decided to commit the United States to the regime, despite a 1957 estimate by the CIA that:

"A facade of representative government is maintained, but the government is in fact essentially authoritarian. The legislative powers of the National Assembly are strictly circumscribed; the judiciary is undeveloped and subordinate to the executive; and the members of the executive branch are little more than the personal agents of Diem."

"No organized opposition, loyal or otherwise, is tolerated, and critics of the regime are often repressed. . . . The exercise of power and responsibility is limited to Diem and a very small circle mainly composed of his relatives."

PAPER ON COAST ESCAPES ACTION

U.S. Also Says It Won't Act
Now Against Knight Chain

By LINDA CHARLTON

The Justice Department announced yesterday that it would not take legal action "at this time" against The Los Angeles Times and the 11-newspaper Knight chain, which yesterday published articles said to be based on secret Government documents.

The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Boston Globe remained under court orders not to publish any further articles drawn from the Pentagon study on the origins of the Vietnam war.

John C. Hushen, a spokesman for the Justice Department, said in Washington late yesterday that the department had reviewed the articles that appeared in The Los Angeles Times and at least seven of the Knight papers and had decided that "they do not constitute any threat to national security."

Opinion Unchanged

He added that "we find no reason to change our opinion" about the nature of the material appearing in The Chicago Sun-Times, which on Wednesday began publishing articles reportedly based on secret Government documents. The department had said, after reviewing the first articles, that the documents had been declassified. That judgment, according to Mr. Hushen, was unchanged by the articles in yes-

terday's issues of The Sun-Times.

Mr. Hushen was asked what action the Justice Department would take if further articles in the Los Angeles and Chicago papers and those of the Knight chain should be felt to present a "threat to national security."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he said. Lee Hills, the executive editor of the Knight Newspaper Group, said that the chain had "no plan at this moment to publish further material from the Pentagon papers." A spokesman for the group said that, unlike the three papers enjoined from further publication, no one from the Justice Department had even requested that the material not be published.

Two More Articles

The Sun-Times, however, published two articles in its Friday issue, which was on the newsstands late yesterday afternoon, that were reportedly based on a number of sources, including the Pentagon, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency.

James F. Hoge, editor of The Sun-Times, said that some of the source documents were classified and some were not.

The latest articles in The Sun-Times dealt with events during the Eisenhower Administration. Those in the Knight newspapers focused on Robert S. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, and the progress of the war in 1967 and early 1968. In both cases, the articles came from the Washington bureaus of the newspapers.

The Knight papers referred only to information "made available to Knight newspapers." Derick Daniels, a senior Knight editor in Detroit

who supervised the project, refused to discuss the articles, the amount of material received or its source.

The Sun-Times said initially that its material had come from the Commission of Inquiry into U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam. When asked how long the articles would continue, Thomas B. Ross, the Chicago paper's Washington bureau chief, said: "We're open-ended."

Articles Widely Published

A random check of several major newspapers across the country indicated that, so far as was possible, they were publishing as much as was available about the so-called Pentagon papers. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The Atlanta Constitution, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Louisville Courier-Journal and The Milwaukee Journal all said they had used news agency articles. The Minneapolis Tribune has used rewritten versions of combined news agency articles.

The Boston Globe was allowed to resume publishing articles supplied by news services and based on the new disclosures published elsewhere when an earlier Federal court order — prohibiting any mention of the contents of such disclosures — was amended. A hearing is scheduled for today on an order by Federal Judge Anthony Julian barring The Globe from publishing additional stories based on its own documents.

The Globe published what was to have been the first of a series of articles on the Pentagon study Tuesday; the Justice Department went to court the same day to obtain the restraining order.

War Plans Made Before '64 Vote, LBJ Memoirs Say

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson has acknowledged in his still-unpublished memoirs that he was preparing for large-scale military involvement in Vietnam prior to the 1964 elections, according to Newsday, a Long Island newspaper.

Newsday said the information from the memoirs -- to be published in November under the title, "The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency" -- was obtained from a publishing industry source. The memoirs, Newsday said, are largely in galley form at the New York firm of Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

The Newsday account of Johnson's attitudes tends to buttress conclusions drawn from a section of the secret Pentagon papers published last week by the New York Times.

'General Consensus'

The Times said the massive Pentagon study said that a "general consensus" within the administration that air attacks probably would have to be launched against Hanoi was reached at a White House strategy meeting in September 1964, just after the Tonkin Gulf incident. No such consensus was made public at the time.

That Johnson concurred in the decision has been disputed in several newspaper stories and articles, including one in yesterday's Baltimore Sun asserting that Johnson was skeptical about initiating air attacks, even after his overwhelming election in 1964.

The researchers and analysts who worked on the Pentagon study, ordered by Robert S. McNamara in 1967, acknowledged there were gaps in their work because they did not have access to presidential papers or many documents from other agencies.

The Newsday story said Johnson depicts himself as having been hesitant for several months about approving military recommendations for bombing North Vietnam. His decision to escalate the war, according to today's story, came because, "I was convinced that our retreat from this challenge would open the path to World War III," Johnson writes.

Comments on Speech

The Newsday account also quotes Johnson's comments about a 1964 campaign speech he gave in Texas in which he asserted that he would not send U.S. troops to "do the fighting that Asian boys should do for themselves."

What he meant, Johnson says, is that America should not "take charge" of the war or provoke a conflict with China. Newsday quotes the memoirs as saying, "I did not mean that we were not going to do any fighting, for we had already lost many good men in Vietnam."

During the 1964 campaign against Sen. Barry Goldwater, supporters of Johnson were highly critical of Goldwater's stand for stronger military action in South Vietnam.

According to Newsday, on March 17, 1964, Johnson approved a recommendation by McNamara to prepare for "a program of graduated military pressure against the North." In September—as asserted in the Pentagon study—the President approved the bombing plan, to be implemented if Communist forces made a "spectacular" attack in the South.

Implemented in February

The plan was put into effect in Feb. 7, 1965, after Johnson twice rejected military advice to begin bombing earlier, the Newsday story said.

In the memoirs, according to the newspaper, Johnson quotes himself as saying to aides when authorizing the bombing: "We have kept our gun over the mantle and our shells in the cupboard for a long time now. And what was the result? They are killing our men while they sleep in the night. I can't ask America soldiers out there to continue to fight with one hand tied behind their backs."

By this time, two Viet Cong attacks—one on the Bien Hoa airbase and the second at Pleiku—had caused sizable American casualties.

Johnson said that while moving in 1964 to build up the U.S. military effort in Vietnam, "I had moments of deep discouragement, times when I felt that the South Vietnamese were their own worst enemies. The South Vietnamese seemed to have a strong impulse to political suicide."

"My Vantage Point"

Johnson prefaced his chronology of his Vietnam decisions by saying, "I have not written these chapters to say, 'This was how it was,' but to say, 'This is how I saw it from my vantage point.'"

In the Sun's story yesterday, Potter discussed two off-the-record interviews he said he had with Johnson early in December 1964. The report of the interviews attributed this statement to Johnson:

"I'm telling the American people everything I know. I haven't made any decision to expand the war, but if I did, I would not announce it because I would not want the enemy to have advance notice."

The Chicago Sun-Times continued a series of articles today based on what it called "top secret Pentagon documents and other sources." The Justice Department has not moved to enjoin the Sun-Times. The government has said it has determined the documents being used were declassified in 1968. Yesterday, the Sun-Times said its material came from sources "involving the Pentagon study."

Eisenhower Policy Cited

Among the material cited in today's Sun-Times was a disclosure that President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958 secretly established a policy to eliminate Communist control in Hanoi and reunite North and South Vietnam under an anti-Communist government.

Quoting from what the paper said was National Security Council Paper 5809, dated April 2, 1958, it said Eisenhower directed the government to "work toward the weakening of the Communists of North and South Vietnam in order to bring about the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Vietnam under anti-Communist leadership."

The decision came at the height of Eisenhower's conference in Ngo Dinh Diem. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, according to the Sun-Times story, also were encouraged by the seemingly mild reaction to Diem's decision to cancel the 1956 elections for all of Vietnam provided for in the 1954 Geneva Accords.

CIA Report

Eisenhower, the Sun-Times said, acquiesced to Diem's move on the basis of a Central Intelligence Agency assessment that Diem's Saigon government "almost certainly would not be able to defeat the Communists in countrywide elections."

The Sun-Times also said secret Pentagon "war games" indicated in early 1964 that strategic bombing of North Vietnam might be a failure. High-level studies in 1967 concluded that this had been the case.

In another reaction to publication of stories on the Pentagon study, the Chicago Tribune in a front-page editorial, suggested today that a group of editors and government officials study the Pentagon papers to decide what can be published safely, and distribute the material to all news media.